

EXHIBIT C

Okay. So we no longer had a car. But Bao didn't seem angry. Instead he was grateful, dutiful, the person he used to be. He poured me my Froot Loops. He borrowed a bicycle and used that. I was still sleeping on the rollaway, worried that somehow I'd now be bad at sex. But Bao didn't seem to mind. Instead he looked at me each day like I was worth something immeasurable. After a while I started getting the hang of that too.

Little things amazed me. The smooth curves of the teakettle, dotted with moisture.

Tree needles, sprayed out and brushing the window in a breeze.

More and more the hospital seemed far away: its shiny boxes, relentlessly clean.

From the basement Bao brought up Grandma's zitan chair. He slid off the sheet, eased it to the table, smoothed its legs with a damp silver cloth. I lowered myself onto the bony cushion, thumbing the grooves of dragon tails that curled down the armrests. Suddenly the chair seemed too big for me, too grand. But that was ridiculous—when Grandma was alive she would fart all over this thing. I scooched my butt, got comfy. Bao folded up the wheelchair. To the curb went the crutches, the walker, both canes. We could have recycled them or given them away, but we liked watching the garbage men hurl them into the truck, those grimy walls descending to slurp them up for good.

Right about then the letter shows up.

Bao was at work. It was a sunny, ignorant day.

It came in the mailbox: real envelope and paper and gold sticker sealing the flap. It was wrapped in a second letter from the surgeon, his boxy handwriting rushed with loops of fervor. So awestruck was he by the selflessness involved that he just had to chaperone the missive himself. I looked at his letter. I thought that doctors couldn't write at all, not even their own names.

Then came hers. She had used a notepad shaped like a daisy. Blue gel pen.

Dear Recipient,

My name is Rose Rothario. I'm a thirty-eight-year-old white female, and I live in Greater Boston.

In 2017 I saw a documentary about altruistic kidney donation, and as the credits rolled I felt wholly dismayed by the daily experiences of those in need. Equipped with this new awareness, I set forth on a journey to offer a great gift, to do my part in bettering a fellow human's life.

I shook open the letter. Six whole daisy pages. Stuff about her surgery, the prep, the PT. It went on.

I'm so grateful to the MGH transplant team, who held my hand from my very first blood test to the date of our paired exchange. I myself know something of suffering, but from those experiences I've acquired both courage and perseverance. I've also learned to appreciate the hardship that others are going through, no matter how foreign. Whatever you've endured, remember that you are never alone.

A few things about me: I like sailing, camping, jewelry, and cats.

As I prepared to make this donation, I drew strength from knowing that my recipient would get a second chance at life. I withstood the pain by imagining and rejoicing in YOU.

I stared at the YOU, underlined three times.

Now I smile at the thought that you are enjoying renewed health. You deserve all that life has to offer, simply because you exist.

If you are willing, I would love to know more about you. Perhaps we could meet. But if you prefer not to, I accept that reaction as well.

*Warmly,
Rose M. Rothario*

There was a photograph. She was tall, slender, a bursting ponytail harnessed to one side. Scissors had cut away the image near her shoulder, as if to remove somebody who'd been standing beside her. I held it to my nose, but it just smelled like a photograph: paper and faint glue, with no whiff of a particular person. She was at some county fair. She was around my age. She was standing by a Tilt-A-Whirl, surrounded by blurry feet, holding a rainbow-swirled lollipop in her fist.

So her name was Rose.

I wanted a cigarette.

But I didn't have one. Bao was at work. Sui was in Xian, obviously asleep. Dad in Bismarck and Mom in Philly, but they had never been any help at all.

I hobbled to the kitchen, opened the cupboard. A stupid move—what did I expect? No car and no booze. I looked for the mouthwash, the vanilla extract, that vial of Estée Lauder. But Bao had done a full sweep.

I sat on the couch. I breathed in and out.